United Nations A/61/597

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 November 2006
English
Original: Spanish

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 121

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Diego **Simancas** (Mexico)

I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2006, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-first session the item entitled "Pattern of conferences" and to allocate it to the Fifth Committee.

2. The Fifth Committee considered the item at its 7th and 24th meetings, on 17 October and 22 November 2006. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records (A/C.5/61/SR.7 and 24).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Conferences;[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/61/129);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2007 (A/61/129/Add.1);

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on the impact of the capital master plan on meetings to be held at Headquarters during its implementation (A/61/300);

(e) Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/61/499).

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/61/32).

06-63092 (E) 011206

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.6

4. At its 24th meeting, on 22 November, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Pattern of conferences" (A/C.5/61/L.6), submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations coordinated by the representative of Argentina.

5. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.6 without a vote (see para. 7).

6. After the adoption of the draft resolution, a statement in explanation of position was made by the representative of South Africa (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China).

III. Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

7. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Pattern of conferences

The General Assembly,

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 40/243 of 18 December 1985, 41/213 of 19 December 1986, 43/222 A to E of 21 December 1988, 51/211 A to E of 18 December 1996, 52/214 of 22 December 1997, 53/208 A to E of 18 December 1998, 54/248 of 23 December 1999, 55/222 of 23 December 2000, 56/242 of 24 December 2001, 56/254 D of 27 March 2002, 56/262 of 15 February 2002, 56/287 of 27 June 2002, 57/283 A of 20 December 2000, 57/283 B of 15 April 2003, 58/250 of 23 December 2003, 59/265 of 23 December 2004, 60/236 A of 23 December 2005 and 60/236 B of 8 May 2006,

Reaffirming its resolution 42/207 C of 11 December 1987, in which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure the equal treatment of the official languages of the United Nations,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences[1] and the relevant reports of the Secretary-General,[2]

Having also considered the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[3]

Reaffirming the provisions relevant to conference services of its resolutions on multilingualism,

I
Calendar of conferences and meetings

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Committee on Conferences;[1]

2. *Approves* the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2007, as submitted by the Committee on Conferences,[4] taking into account the observations of the Committee and subject to the provisions of the present resolution;

3. *Authorizes* the Committee on Conferences to make any adjustments to the calendar of conferences and meetings for 2007 that may become necessary as a result of actions and decisions taken by the General Assembly at its sixty-first session;

4. *Notes with satisfaction* that the Secretariat has taken into account the arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolutions 53/208 A, 54/248, 55/222, 56/242, 57/283 B, 58/250, 59/265 and 60/236 A concerning Orthodox Good Friday

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/61/32).
[2] A/61/129 and Add.1 and A/61/300.
[3] A/61/499.
[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/61/32), annex II.

and the official holidays of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and requests all intergovernmental bodies to observe those decisions when planning their meetings;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that any modification to the calendar of conferences and meetings is implemented strictly in accordance with the mandate of the Committee on Conferences and other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

II

A. Utilization of conference-servicing resources

1. *Reaffirms* the practice that, in the use of conference rooms, priority must be given to the meetings of Member States;

2. *Notes with satisfaction* that the overall utilization factor at the four main duty stations increased to 85 per cent in 2005 from 83 per cent in 2004;

3. *Welcomes* the steps taken by those bodies that have adjusted their programmes of work in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources, and requests the Committee on Conferences to continue consultations with the secretariats and bureaux of bodies that underutilize their conference-servicing resources;

4. *Recognizes* the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that, as far as possible, all requests for conference services for the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States are met;

5. *Notes with concern* the difficulties experienced by Member States owing to the lack of conference services for some meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

6. *Also notes with concern* that, although the percentage of meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States that were provided with interpretation services in the four main duty stations in 2005 increased to 87 per cent, as compared with 85 per cent in 2004, the figure is still below the 98 per cent provided with services from May 2001 to April 2002, 92 per cent from May 2002 to April 2003 and 90 per cent from May 2003 to April 2004;

7. *Recalls* that meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States have so far been provided with interpretation services on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to explore innovative ways to address this problem and to report to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences;

8. *Once again urges* intergovernmental bodies to spare no effort at the planning stage to take into account the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, to make provision for such meetings in their programmes of work and to notify conference services, well in advance, of any cancellations so that unutilized conference-servicing resources may, to the extent possible, be reassigned to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

9. *Notes with satisfaction* that, in accordance with several General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 60/236 B, section II.A, paragraph 10, in conformity with the headquarters rule, all meetings of Nairobi-based United Nations bodies took place in Nairobi in 2005, but reiterates the need for vigilance in this respect, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-second session through the Committee on Conferences;

10. *Welcomes* the fact that international and local corporations and academic institutions are being allowed to host events at the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa after screening, on a case-by-case basis, by the United Nations Security and Safety Service to ensure compliance with the United Nations headquarters minimum operating security standards, which is likely to contribute to increasing the utilization of the centre;

11. *Welcomes* the efforts undertaken to increase utilization of the conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa and to align the methodology used to compile utilization statistics with that of Conference Services at the four main duty stations, including building on the cooperative agreement the Commission established with the Division of Conference Services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue efforts to ensure that the Economic Commission for Africa strengthens linkages with other centres and bodies;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to explore means to increase the utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, bearing in mind the headquarters minimum operating security standards, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session through the Committee on Conferences;

B. Impact on meetings held at Headquarters during the implementation of the capital master plan, strategy IV (phased approach)

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the impact of the capital master plan on meetings to be held at Headquarters during its implementation;[5]

2. *Requests* bodies having their meetings listed in the calendar of conferences, when planning their meetings, especially major or high-level conferences, summits and special meetings, organs created under the Charter of the United Nations, their subsidiary bodies and other intergovernmental organizations and treaty bodies that normally meet at Headquarters to take into consideration the limitations and inflexibility of the entire conference facilities at Headquarters throughout the renovation period;

3. *Notes in particular* that there will be noise during the construction, which will be carried out in the evenings and at weekends;

4. *Requests* all meeting requesters and organizers to liaise closely with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the Secretariat

[5] A/61/300.

on all matters related to the scheduling of meetings to allow maximum predictability in coordinating the Headquarters activities during the construction work;

5. *Requests* the Committee on Conferences to keep the matter under constant review, and requests the Secretary-General to report regularly to the Committee on matters pertaining to the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations during the construction period;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that implementation of the capital master plan will not compromise the quality of conference services provided to Member States and the equal treatment of the language services, which should be provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to receiving maximum quality of services;

III
Integrated global management

1. *Notes with appreciation* the progress achieved across duty stations in integrating information technology into meetings management and documentation-processing systems and the global approach to sharing standards, good practices and technological achievements among conference services at all duty stations;

2. *Welcomes* the establishment of a regular budget technology post at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and other efforts there to share best practices, which are essential for the successful achievement of integrated global management;

3. *Reaffirms* that the major goals of the reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management are to provide high-quality documents in a timely manner in all official languages, as well as high-quality conference services to Member States at all duty stations, and to achieve those aims as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the compatibility of technologies used in all duty stations and to ensure that they are user-friendly in all official languages;

5. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to complete the task of uploading all important older United Nations documents onto the United Nations website in all six official languages on a priority basis, so that these archives are also available to Member States through that medium;

6. *Recalls* section II.B, paragraph 4, of its resolution 60/236 B, in which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure that measures taken by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them as a key performance indicator of the Department provide equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluation in the six official languages of the United Nations and are in full compliance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences, on progress made in this regard;

7. *Also recalls* section II.B, paragraph 6, of its resolution 60/236 B, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, through the Committee on Conferences, on both the results of the work of

the task forces and the outcome of the ongoing consultations among United Nations duty stations on a follow-up to the recommendations of the task forces;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly apprised of progress made in integrated global management;

IV
Documentation and publication-related matters

1. *Emphasizes* the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters;

3. *Stresses* that matters related to conference management, including documentation, fall within the purview of the Fifth Committee;

4. *Notes with concern* the continued high level of late submissions of documentation by author departments, which, in turn, have a negative impact on the functioning of intergovernmental bodies, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly, at its sixty-second session, through the Committee on Conferences, on impediments, if any, to achieving full compliance with the ten-week and six-week rules for the issuance of pre-session documents, including, where appropriate, proposed measures to address such impediments;

5. *Welcomes* the new accountability mechanism set up in the Secretariat for the submission, processing and issuance of documentation, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Conferences for its further consideration and analysis, in order to provide concrete recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session;

6. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to ensure that the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in all official languages are followed with respect to both the distribution of printed copies and the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System and the United Nations website, in keeping with section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 55/222;

7. *Reaffirms* its decision in section III, paragraph 9, of its resolution 59/265, that the issuance of documents on planning, budgetary and administrative matters requiring urgent consideration by the General Assembly shall be accorded priority;

8. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to direct all departments of the Secretariat to include the following elements in their reports:

(a) Summary of the report;

(b) Consolidated conclusions, recommendations and other proposed actions;

(c) Relevant background information;

9. *Encourages* intergovernmental and expert bodies to include the above-mentioned elements, where appropriate, in their reports to the General Assembly;

10. *Reiterates* its request that all documents submitted to legislative organs by the Secretariat, intergovernmental and expert bodies for consideration and action have conclusions and recommendations in bold print;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to take steps to improve the quality and accuracy of meeting records in all six official languages through full reliance in the preparation and translation of those records on sound recordings and written texts of statements as they were delivered in the original languages;

12. *Notes* the efforts of the Secretariat to clear the backlog in the issuance of summary records, while noting with concern that some delays in issuance still occur;

13. *Notes* the options enumerated in paragraphs 76 to 80 of the report of the Secretary-General;[6]

V
Translation and interpretation-related matters

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to ensure the highest quality of interpretation and translation services in all official languages;

2. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to make sure that terminology used in translation and interpretation services reflects the latest linguistic norms and terminology of the official languages in order to ensure the highest quality;

3. *Also reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General, when recruiting temporary assistance in the language services, to ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of their services, with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages and taking into account their respective workloads;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to improve the accuracy of translation of documents into the official languages, giving particular significance to the quality of translation;

5. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to seek evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, including through the language-specific informational meetings held twice a year, and to ensure that such measures provide equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluation in the six official languages of the United Nations and are in full compliance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

6. *Notes* the efforts made so far to improve the rates of self-revision, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to address the question of the appropriate level of self-revision that is consistent with quality in all official languages and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session;

7. *Also notes* the proposal on workload standards to develop a comprehensive methodology for performance measurement and management from a

[6] A/61/129.

full-system perspective,[7] and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly periodically, starting at its sixty-second session, on the specific indicators proposed under the headings of timeliness, quality, financial performance and organizational learning and growth;

8. *Expresses continued concern* at the high vacancy rate in the interpretation and translation services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, especially the chronic difficulty in staffing the Arabic Interpretation Unit, and requests the Secretary-General to address this as a matter of priority through, inter alia, assistance from Member States in advertising and facilitating the conduct of competitive examinations to fill these language vacancies;

9. *Notes with concern* the high reliance on freelance interpretation at the United Nations Office at Vienna, and requests the Secretary-General to report on any inconsistency in quality of interpretation services related thereto, including at other duty stations, and on measures to address that issue, if needed, to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session through the Committee on Conferences;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide at all United Nations duty stations the adequate staff and grade level with a view to ensuring appropriate quality control for external translations;

11. *Notes* the Secretary-General's plans to address the issue of succession planning by enhancing internal and external training programmes, developing staff exchange programmes between organizations and participating in outreach activities to institutions that train language staff for international organizations;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to hold competitive examinations for the recruitment of language staff sufficiently in advance so as to fill current and future vacancies in language services in a timely manner, bearing in mind the persistent situation at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and to inform the General Assembly at its sixty-second session of efforts in this regard.

[7] Ibid., para. 69.